OUR FAITH

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Purpose: -- "To diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure religion, which, in accordance with the teachings of Jesus, is summed up in love to God and love to man."

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A Prayer

Lord of our years, Love Eternal, may we with earnest hearts seek the spirit and the mind of Jesus. May the glory of his life shine upon us, revealing the poverty of our own lives; may his sacrificial spirit be our judgment till it melts our hearts; may his confidence in thee stir our faithlessness to deeper trust; his righteousness evoke in us a rich desire to walk his road—however lonely the way at times may seem. Grant, O Lord, that in our journey through life our understanding of thy law may be deepened, quickening our devotion to all that is lovely, true and pure, opening our ears to melodies and whispers from afar, that at the last we may rejoice in the certainty of thy Fatherhood.

Enable us to know, O God, that the miracle of our faith lies not in strange events told by men of old, but in the glorious knowledge of him who said, "The things that I do, ye can do also". Prepare our hearts with power, that day by day our witness to his life and faith may increase. Fill us also with an unquenchable longing for fellowship with thy spirit, and, betimes, stretch forth thy hand that in our stumbling we may be guided and upheld. Amen.

The Supreme Need of Our Time

Many people say that the supreme need of our time is devotion to truth and righteousness and brotherhood. Is it? Prophets have long declared that these are the keys to God's kingdom on earth. And they are. I do not minimize their importance. But something much more basic is needed. Our forefathers had it, but many of us have lost it.

Have you seen in magazines pictures of little Chinese children lying down to die in gutters? Have you heard that in parts of Europe a "potato is more valuable than a human life"? There is enough needless suffering the whole world round to stir in us such a flood tide of pity, compassion and an urgency to save that we should be unable to contain ourselves.

And yet is any such reaction in evidence? Why not? I think I know. Most of us have lost our vision of life's holiness. Nothing is especially sacred. Two World Wars in our lifetime have cast their shadow upon us. Fifty million human beings sacrificed to Mars make life seem cheap. And the sophistication of a materialistic age has turned millions into scoffers.

What is the solution? More sermons on truth and righteousness and brotherhood? You know it isn't! Man has to discover again whose child he is and to whom he and this universe belong. Each of us must open the windows of his soul as Jesus did and catch sight again of our God and His righteousness. We must be electrified, not by the wonders of a scientific age, nor by the promise of social utopias, but by the beauty and the glory of our own souls as they respond to the majestic power, the eternal purpose, and the outreaching love of God.—

CARL BIHLDORFF

Come Meet with Us at the May Meetings!

MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS NOW FOR THE UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN COMMITTEE SUPPER AT THE MAY MEETINGS — **Wednesday, May 21,** at 6:00 p.m. at Old South Church, at Copley Square. Speaker, **Dean Willard L. Sperry,** on the theme: **"The Continuity of the Christian Tradition".** Write for reservations now to Rev. Paul H. Chapman, 33 Glen Green, Winchester, Mass. Price: One Dollar.

Divinity?

How hackneyed and "dated" seems the stereotyped charge that Unitarians deny the divinity of Jesus Christ! And what a strange confusion seems to exist in the minds both of those who bring the charge and of the Unitarians who acquiescently admit it! For what is divinity?

You cannot doubt what it was to the ancient world. In Homer or the Greek tragedies, in the Book of Genesis, in all the old legends of heavenly beings coming to earth to take part in the affairs of men—it is perfectly clear how men thought of divinity. In much the same terms men still interpret the divinity of Jesus Christ.

Mr. C. S. Lewis, the author of the "Screw Tape Letters" has written elsewhere of Jesus, "He became a man to mend you (how would you like to become a cow for several years?) This shocking statement implies that Christianity still takes seriously the idea of masquerading deities. And Mr. Lewis is but one of a multitude of the orthodox and neo-orthodox who still think of divinity as the ancients thought of it. Unitarian Christianity has not finished its work!

Surely in Jesus there was something quite different — a far more immediate revealing of divinity. In Him there was something new and perfect. Men were astonished at his teachings and then, illustrated by new understanding they were filled with a consciousness of the reality of God. In him somehow all things were made new for them. In their devotion to him somehow they themselves were made whole, were empowered for useful service, and were filled with confidence and joy in whatever life might bring. If this wasn't divinity, what was it?

The orthodox or neo-orthodox belief in Christ diminishes his glorious stature to that of a mythological deity. The Unitarian Christian, repudiating these ancient interpretations and reclothing him with wonder and power, is the real believer in the divinity of Jesus Christ.

PALFREY PERKINS

New Horizons and Unitarians

(A statement originally given to the Junior Church of the First Unitarian Church of Cleveland, Ohio)

Today our horizons are broader than ever before. We see farther. We hear and speak farther. Our thoughts move farther among the stars on the one hand and among the atoms and electrons on the other than ever has been done in the history of man. But I wish to speak especially of our new human horizons. We today have two billion neighbors whereas we used to have only a score.

I find special value in the Unitarian Church because it expands its horizons just as fast as its members expand theirs. It is a fundamental principle of Unitarianism that each member is expected to seek the light and truth in his own way and in accordance with his innermost inspiration. The church thus can be just as natural a vehicle and help to the religious life of its members, as a self-governing democracy is to the civic life of its members.

It has been an inspiration for me, in visiting more than twenty of our Unitarian Churches to find in each of them a genuine devotion to the cause of God and man. It is a dedication to the cause for which we daily pray when we ask that the will of God be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

Speaking constructively and realistically, I find widespread agreement upon the great and simple Commandments presented by Jesus, and I believe that His influence today is the greatest influence in the world in guiding humanity toward peace and security.

It is for us to identify these Commandments. The first of them is, "Thou shalt love thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind and with all thy strength." This is the Fatherhood of God. The second Commandment is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This is the Brotherhood of Man. The rule of conduct which He gave was, "Whatsoever ye would that others should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." This is the Golden Rule.

The influence of the foregoing Commandments upon the world today is greater than the influence of any governmental leader either of our time or of any other. I believe that all mankind can share in the faith expressed in those Commandments and to the extent that mankind does share in that faith, we shall have just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

HAROLD H. BURTON

(Associate Justice, United States Supreme Court, and former Moderator of the American Unitarian Association.)

Teaching Children About God

It is almost incredible, but true nevertheless. Some liberals have now become so confused that they quite seriously speak of "the harm done by indoctrinating little children in a belief in God."

Such a thought is symptomatic of the general sickness of our whole modern culture. We have so lost our bearings, and our sense of direction, that we move in a great blanketing fog, a sterile darkness, in which all things appear vague and gray.

The thing which so many of our confused generation forget, especially on this question of indoctrination, is that life simply will not stand still while we make up our minds whether we are to teach our children about God or not. The decision is forced. And this is the point: If we do not teach them, we actually indoctrinate them against the thought and experience of God. We deprive them of the opportunity of that inner development of sensitive and vital faith which has been the deep experience of many of us.

For religion is a little like music, in this respect. Never to expose a child to good

music, in the fear that you will prejudice his judgment of music, is, in effect, and very decidedly, to condition him against that very high type of music which requires continued acquaintance and growing appreciation. Just so with God. Our inner life and experience of God needs the same careful husbanding and nurturing as our sense of beautiful music. It can never begin too early.

It is as though the stream of life were the Mississippi River, and we afloat upon it in a rowboat. It is all well and good to debate the question whether we should or should not stop at St. Louis—but in the meantime we float past St. Louis, and the question is decided negatively for us. Just so, many of our modern children have been denied their rightful religious heritage and experience by the indifference or confusion of parents who hesitated to provide religious training for them.

Dr. Henry C. Link is a most eminent example of such confusion. He and Mrs. Link did not provide any religious training for their children, for the same reasons that are being offered today. But read again that remarkable volume, "The Return to Religion," and see how Dr. Link lived to confess that he was completely mistaken in that policy.

HARVEY SWANSON

What we can Learn from the Past

The Unitarian Christian, who sees in the historic Christian tradition a grasp of existence unequalled by any other scheme of comprehension, constantly faces the charge of "being out of date," "turning back to outworn ideas," or "worshipping what is dead." The very word "tradition" is anathema to our critics. But no true liberal should be dismayed by superficial criticism that condemns thought because it is either "too old" or "too new." Surely, he is both a fool and an il-liberal who dogmatically closes his eyes to the past and refuses to learn from it. John Mackay begins his little book, **Heritage and Destiny**, with these words: "There are times in the history of persons and peoples, particularly times of crisis, when a rediscovery of yesterday opens a new pathway to tomorrow, when the awakening of a sense of heritage becomes a potent determinant of destiny."

We Unitarians would do well to ponder this thought. We have a potent heritage. It has been the fashion, in our elect circles recently to announce that we cannot live on our past reputations. It is implied that the classic days of Unitarianism are to be stored away in histories, while we focus upon what is new and novel. But we must distinguish between mere "leaning" on past greatness and assimilation of that greatness itself. We have perhaps been guilty of the former, but have by no means exhausted the possibilities of the latter. Our Church has produced men of God of major rank, and we starve ourselves when we neglect their written heritage.

It is not true, for example, that we have "outgrown" Channing. We are prone to mouth his name with reverence, along with other Unitarian heroes. And certain of his phrases roll readily from our tongues. But the widely-quoted "I Call That Mind Free . . ." is not a characteristic utterance of this devout Christian. His strictures against an outworn Calvinism are definitely dated, and we flail the air when we wave them now. Of lasting importance are his words on the Christian life. We do Channing a grave injustice when we fail to read his **Daily Prayer, Christian Worship, Likeness to God,** and **The Perfect Life.** They contain the substance, the meat, the daily nourishment of his legacy.

Our neglect and our misuse of Channing is but symptomatic of a greater neglect of the deceased giants of Unitarianism. In order to make way for an extravagant farrago of "new" pamphlets, many of superficial content, some of the classics of Unitarianism have been abandoned. Martineau's **Ideal Substitutes for God,** still the most trenchant answer to those who would try to reduce Christian faith to strictly scientific language, is no longer available. Dodson's **A Twentieth Century Man's Faith in God** is not to be reprinted.

In the books and magazines sponsored by our denomination a generation or more ago, our Unitarian fathers wrote about problems that are precisely the ones that trouble us today. And they wrote with a vivacity, a clarity of perception, yet to be surpassed.

The time has come to get out the neglected copies of Channing, E. H. Sears, Frederic Henry Hedge, James Freeman Clarke, Henry W. Bellows, Thomas Starr King, Martineau, Thom, Upton, and J. Estlin Carpenter. They were brilliant spokesmen for Unitarianism. To rediscover in them the Unitarian message in the light of modern life is the pathway to tomorrow for our denomination.

EDWARD W. OHRENSTEIN
Dean of Starr King School for the Ministry.

A Children's Memorial Forest

The members of our Little Church are giving — and maybe to a small extent collecting — money so that they may help the planting of the Children's Memorial Forest in Palestine. Lent is a season when Christians dwell much upon the spirit of one, whom Theodore Parker called "a

little Jewish boy of a thoughtful turn, who in a few years was to make the Caesars ridiculous." What better form of Christian devotion at this time can there be than a gift of the children of America in memory of the Jewish children who were slain during the reign of insane hate in Europe It is still hard for most of us vividly to realize that between September 1, 1939 and May 10, 1945 (V-E Day) the cruel Nazis put to death more than one million Jewish boys and girls between the ages of one and twelve. The horrible fact stands, however distant it may seem to many; and truly it stands terribly close to any alert Christian conscience. A million children, too young and tender to be exploited as slave laborers, were murdered methodically in concentration camps by starvation, medical experimentations and lethal gas chambers! Trees on the hills of Galilee will be but an ironical substitution for those promising human lives; but this projected Forest at least will be a living memorial; it will have beauty and practical usefulness in the land of Palestine; it will perpetuate itself and throw a kindly shade upon children who survived the slaughter of the innocents in those Years of our Lord in the Twentieth Century. The members of our Little Church hope to give enough money for the requisite number of trees to form a Garden; and then this Garden will be marked by the name of their Church in our much favored town of Milton, Massachusetts, U.S.A. I am so pleased they are keen to do it.

VIVIAN T. POMEROY

Democracy and Religion

(From the writings of William L. Sullivan)

Where is the creativeness of the American spirit which shall provide a religion that shall have both heighth and depth; freedom and yet not shallowness; intellectual liberty but none of the cant of the Cynics; a religion which shall be invested with solemnity, whose temples shall be homes of adoration, whose altars shall be the centers that shall attract the highest aspirations of the purest among us? I look for that to come. Shall it not yet be in store for us that we shall see this divine idea taking invisible form and vigor before our eyes?

Such a religion would say to men: You are Godlike; you are to win your salvation —nobody is to throy it at yu. You are to gain it, not as a largess of charity, but by wrestling for it in the good fight. You are to have a God that reveals His will today more richly than ever He did upon the Mesopotamian plains. You are in immediate communion with the All Holy and the Most High. You are working out His will.

History is but the vesture of God that trails on earth. It is a divine thing committed to human hands. The venture of democracy is a creation that is to be ours, though we are engaged in it by a light that shines from heaven.

I Believe

Personal Statements of Faith from Unitarian Men and Women

"I believe in the freedom to believe in the truth.

"I believe that the religion Jesus lived and taught should serve as a pattern for our own daily living.

"I believe in one God as the Father of all humanity; hence, too, in the common brotherhood of all men.

"I believe that, with time, we can optimistically conceive of a united, friendly world of nations, achieved finally by the slow but certain advance of individual character."

ROBERT E. KNOLL

"I find it hard to say in words how I feel the continual presence of God. . . .

"I try to see God in every thing I see and do. If I journey to the open country I see him everywhere, but especially in growing things and all animals—the great ladder of life.

"I know that music and literature stir my soul, at times. And I feel the hand of God through man. I feel that man must now use his reason as never before in history. I, for one, have faith in God that he will lead us to permanent peace, if we will only use our God given abilities.

"Therefore, to me religion means love of life and a continual searching to find out the best ways to make all the world a better place in which to live."

JOHN R. BURKHART

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